

Telework Defined

Telework

Joni McDuffy, one of your policy analysts, has requested to work at home two days a week. Joni plans to retire in about three years and is considering purchasing a small farmhouse about 70 miles from work. Because the majority of her duties involve market and legal analysis, she generally works alone using the information she gains through unclassified automated systems and web sites. She already has a laptop and an extra phone line into her current home. If she could be allowed to work at home two days a week, she would purchase the farmhouse. She is willing to let you name the days of the week she needs to be in the office

Requests like Joni's are becoming more common as office as housing prices rise, commuting time increase and information that once was available only in an office is now available through the Internet. And requests like Joni's are being approved when appropriate.

The twenty-first century workplace has changed. Many people are working at sites other than the traditional workplace. This holds true not only for the private sector but also for the federal government. The Office of Personnel

Management (OPM) is encouraging federal agencies to use telework in appropriate situations.

What is telework? Telework refers to any arrangement in which an employee performs officially assigned duties away from the traditional office, whether in a geographically convenient satellite office or at home. The terms "flexiplace" or "telecommuting" are also used as a substitute for telecommuting, because they were names associated with work-athome projects conducted by OPM in the early 1990s.

Why Telecommute?

First reason -- it is the law.

SEC. 359 of P. L. 106-346 of October 23, 2000

Each executive agency shall establish a policy under which eligible employees of the agency may participate in telecommuting to the maximum extent possible without diminished employee performance. No later than six months after the date of enactment of the Act, the Director of the Office of personnel Management shall provide that the requirements of this section are applied to 25 percent of the Federal workforce, and to an additional 25 percent of such workforce each year thereafter.

Second, telework is a Governmentwide, nationwide project sponsored by the President's Council on Management Improvement (PMCI) and co-directed by OPM and the General Services Administration.



Benefits of Telework

Implemented in January 1990, it was established to:

- improve the Government's ability to recruit and retain capable employees,
- improve employee quality of life, and
- reduce Federal operating costs.

Former President Clinton strongly supported telework initiatives. In 1994 and 1996, he issued memoranda directing the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies to expand the use of family-friendly workplace practices, which included telecommuting.

Telework:

- improves the quality of work life and job performance,
- increases productivity, e.g. provides a distraction free environment for reading, thinking and writing,
- improves morale,
- reduces stress by giving employees more options to balance work and family demands;
- decreases traffic and parking congestion, energy consumption, and air pollution; and
- allows for continuity of operations.

Types of Telework Arrangements

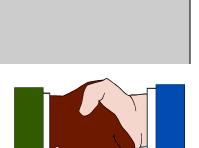
Work Suitable for Telework

Furthermore, telework extends employment opportunities to people with disabilities, including employees who have partially recovered from work related injuries who can do the job from an off site location or might otherwise have to retire on disability because of continuing health problems. Moreover, telework may give employers access to employees with hard-to-find skills who are located in other cities or states.

There are two types of telework arrangements -- regular and recurring and ad hoc.

- Regular and recurring means an approved work schedule where an eligible employee regularly works at least one day a pay per biweekly pay period at an alternate work site. Must sign a telework agreement.
- Ad hoc means an approved telework arrangement performed at an alternate work site on an occasional, one-time or irregular basis. May sign a telework agreement.
- Work suitable for telework depends on the content and requirements of the position, rather than the job title. Work may not be suitable if the employee needs extensive face-

Characteristics of success

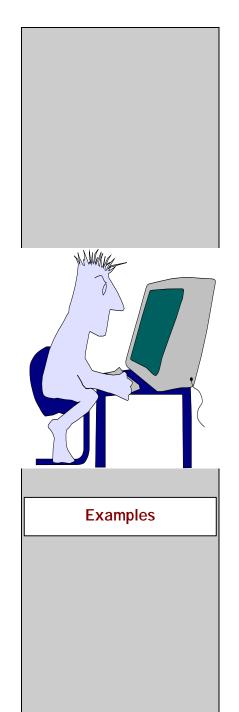


to-face contact or frequent access to material which cannot be removed from the regular office; involves access to classified material; or if it would be too expensive for the activity to make the work site or job assignments amenable to a telework environment.

Successful telework arrangements have included but are not limited to tasks that are:

- Easy to measure such as data or word processing, telephone surveys, case work, computer programming, project-oriented with a specific product;
- Project-oriented with a specific product such as data analysis, proposal or literature reviews, and written reports.

The characteristics of the employee and supervisor are important to make telework arrangements successful. The employee should be someone, who is organized, highly disciplined, is a self-starter, requires minimal supervision and has a history of successful and timely completion of assignments. The employee must also be trained and knowledgeable of both the job requirements and the expectation of customers. It is inappropriate for trainees to telework because of the need for supervision.



The supervisor of the employee must be flexible and willing to try out new ways of operating as well as comfortable in managing by results.

It is important to understand that an employee does not have the right to telework. It is up to management to decide whether the employee can work at an alternative work site. This depends on the nature of the position the employee holds and the work habits of the employee. Management also has the right to end an employee's use of telework if, for example, the employee's performance declines or

if the arrangement no longer meets the organization's needs.

Example 1: Kevin Johnson is a Management Analyst in the **Environment Office of a naval** command. Kevin's position deals with reviewing and making recommendations on various environmental issues associated with the command. Kevin is asthmatic and suffers from severe attacks due to the air pollution and seasonal pollen irritants. As a result, he is frequently forced to be absent from work on days when his breathing is affected. When Kevin is at work his performance is excellent and his knowledge of his field is unquestioned. Although he is still capable of performing the





functions of his job, Kevin is reluctantly considering retiring on disability because he feels he is letting his office down. A coworker tells him about the Telework program. He submits a memorandum requesting to be considered for the program, via his first line supervisor, to the Department Head.

Based on Kevin's situation, he would be an excellent candidate for the program - his work requires independence, may be done from a remote site, he is knowledgeable of the work and his supervisors know that he will produce the desired results. Kevin is willing to come to the office whenever he is needed there. Also, this arrangement would eliminate the need for a valued employee to retire.

Kevin also did the right thing by submitting a memorandum to the Department Head via his first line supervisor to be considered for the program. Kevin's request *should* contain medical documentation to help his supervisor evaluate his request.

Example 2: Mary Held's mother is about to be released from a rehabilitation center where she was treated for a broken hip. Mary's mother needs to attend physical therapy two mornings a week for

approximately eight weeks. Mary would like to accompany her mother to the therapy sessions if possible.

Mary requests that she be allowed to work at home two days a week during the eight-week therapy. Since the therapy will take approximately three hours each day (including travel), Mary has requested leave for the hours of the therapy sessions and travel. Mary's work can be accomplished from home on this schedule.

Since Mary is an excellent and motivated employee, this request should be given serious consideration. Mary has requested leave during the periods that she will not be working, and the work Mary does can be completed successfully at home. Mary now has one less concern to distract her and you have a happy employee. Care has been taken in this case to insure that Mary is not using the telework arrangement to provide dependent care -- which is not allowed under the telework program.

Example 3: Ronald MacInnes has had frequent disagreements with his co-workers. Recently, several of his co-workers have mentioned to you that they are afraid of Ron. Realizing the problem, you discuss

The Telecommuting Agreement

Useful Web Site

your concerns with Ron. He says that he would rather work at home and that way he would not come in contact with "the incompetents in this office." He asks permission to telework.

Ron's case requires care. He may have a position that would allow for telework. But Ron's work behavior is questionable. Probably, it is best to address his behavior problem in a traditional work setting.

Attachment 1 contains a sample Telework Program Agreement. Attachment 2 contains a sample Self-certification Safety Checklist for Home-based Telework.

The US Office of Personnel Management has some very useful information on its web site relating to telework. Its web site is:

http://www.opm.gov/wrkfam/telecomm/telecomm.htm

Department of Defense policy and guidance is found on the Civilian Personnel Management Service's web site:

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/benefits/pdf/telework/telework_policy.pdf

http://www.cpms.osd.mil/fas/benefits/pdf/telework/telework_guide.pdf

Questions and Answers Question 1: Won't the employee's work suffer without direct, on-site supervision?

Answer: The opposite is more often the case, partly because the employee working at home or a satellite office has fewer interruptions and distractions and partly because the individual has a strong incentive to demonstrate the value of working away from the traditional work site.

Question 2: How can I monitor work performance when the employee is not physically present?

Answer: Supervisors can measure what the employee produces by examining the product and results of the employee's efforts. It is also helpful to use project schedules, key milestones, regular status reports, and team reviews. Supervisors may call employees working in the alternative work sites to get updates as well. Remember that the work that the employee does plays a significant role in whether telecommuting is appropriate. Before approving anyone for telecommuting, workout in advance performance and reporting expectations. Telework is inappropriate for trainees and employees who require close supervision.

Questions 3: Should a specific schedule be set for work at the alternate work site?

Answer: Yes. All work schedules are discretionary and require management approval. A pre-set schedule of telework hours should be established prior to the employee working at the alternate work site. Ad hoc assignments or changes in work schedule may be make at management's discretion to meet work needs or to accommodate the employee.

Question 4: Can an employee use flextime and alternate work schedules along with alternate work sites (flexiplace)? What about Alternate Work Schedules?

Answer: Yes. Managers may approve the combined use of flextime and alternate work schedule and flexiplace. Reports from telework programs recommend that optimal benefits from telework arrangements can be achieved through their combined use. However, again, it is the nature of the work that determines whether such flexibility will work.

Question 5: Can a supervisor participate in the flexible workplace program?

Answer: Yes, but care must be taken to ensure that the employees know how to contact the supervisor for advice, guidance and, if needed, approval. Our advice is that should the supervisor be working at an alternate workplace, that a senior member of the staff who is in the office be designated to provide onsite supervision of the office.

Question 6: Can telework help an employee with child or other dependent care needs?

Answer: Telework can provide valuable assistance with dependent care. Time saved commuting to work can be spent with family members. For example, a parent may need less after school care for a school age child, or an adult child may have time to take an aging parent to the doctor. However, employees should not be caring for others when they are working at home.

Question 7: What equipment will the employee need at the home based work site and who will provide it?

Answer: The needed equipment and who will provide it will vary by the situation. Generally speaking, organizations are not required to provide equipment at home based work sites. Each activity must

establish its own practices on the provision and installation of equipment. When in question check the guidance on the OPM and DoD web sites mentioned above.

The Computer/Electronic
Accommodations Program (CAP) was
established as the centrally funded
DoD program that provides
assisting technology to allow DoD
employees with disabilities to
access computer and
telecommunication systems. For
further information about CAP, you
can contact the Human Resources
Office Washington.

Question 8: Who is responsible for maintaining and servicing Government or privately owned equipment used at the alternative work site?

Answer: Generally, the government will be responsible for the service and maintenance of Government-owned equipment. Teleworkers using their own equipment are responsible for its service and maintenance.

Question 9. Are business phone calls made from the home reimbursable?

Answer: An employee may be reimbursed for business related long

distance phone calls over the employee's personal phone. GSA regulation (41 CFR 101.7) provides for reimbursement on SF 1164 for telephone calls approved by the supervisor. Internet services may also be provided at Government expense as needed. Activities may also provide employees with Government telephone credit cards.

Question: 10: Who pays for any increase in home utility expenses incurred by employees as a result of telework?

Answer: Work-at-home arrangements may increase an employee's home utility costs. **Balanced against these increases** are potential savings to the employee resulting from reduced commuting, childcare (during the period the employee would otherwise be commuting to and from work), meals, and clothing expenses. Potential cost and saving to the employee and the government cannot be viewed in isolation from each other. An activity may not use appropriated funds for items of personal expense unless there is a specific statutory authority to do so. In short, the employee pays.

Question 11: Who is liable for work related injuries and/or damages at the alternative work site?

Answer: The Federal Government. Government employees suffering from work related injuries and/or damages at the alternative work site are covered under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act, the Federal Tort Claims, or the Federal Employees Compensation Act (workers' compensation).

12. Who approves the participation in the program - the supervisor in the office or HRO?

Answer: Generally, it is the supervisor or someone within the supervisory chain of command. At some activities, there may be a single office that approves all requests within the activity. In any case, discussions with program specialists in the HRO may help to clarify potential concerns before telecommuting begins.

Question 13: Is it the responsibility of the supervisor to inspect the work site? What about security for equipment used at the alternate work site?

Answer: The inspection of the employee's alternate work site is not a requirement but it is a good idea for safety measures. The work site should meet OSHA requirements. Should the employee get injured at the alternate work

site, he/she can file a workers' compensation claim for the injury. Attachment 2 contains a Self-Certification Safety Checklist. Security for the equipment would be the same as if it were located at the official workstation, i.e. barcoded, serial numbers recorded, virus scanning of the software, etc.

Question 14: I'm confused about the 25% requirement under the law. Is the law not saying that everyone will be offered the opportunity for telework?

Answer: Yes, but the key words in the law are "eligible employees." To be eligible, the employee must be employed in a position for which telework is appropriate AND that the employee has exhibited characteristics suitable for telework.

The law requires that at the end of a four-year period all eligible employees will be offered the opportunity to participate in telework. The law emphasizes the Federal Government's desire that to the maximum extent possible employees will have the opportunity to telework.

Telecommuting Work Program Agreement

The following constitutes an agreem	nent
between	(Activity/Office) and
(employee).	The employee agrees to work at the activity
approved alternative workplace ind	icated below and to follow all applicable
policies and procedures.	
	(Office) have agreed to this agreement
for the length of the employee's emp	oloyment with, subject to
	ents as determined by
(Department Head).	
	y and Benefits
	that a telecommuting arrangement is not a
basis for changing the employee's sa	alary or benefits.
Duty Station an	d Alternative Workplace
(Office)	and the employee both agree that the
employee's official duty station is:	
The alternative workplace will be:	
Note: All pay, leave and travel entit	tlement is based on the official duty station.
1 3	,
Of	ficial Duties
	ployee agrees to perform official duties only
	oved alternative workplace. The employee
	ness while in an official duty status at the
-	caring for dependents or making home
repairs.	carried for any and construction of streeting received
-	
Work Schod	ule and Tour of Duty
	employee agree that the employee's official
tour of duty is as follows:	r - J

Security

If the	(Office) or any agent acting in behalf of
	(Office) provides government equipment/supplies (i.e., computer
facsimile n	nachine, printer, etc.) for the alternative workplace, the employee
agrees to th	ne following security provisions:

- 1) The equipment will be used for official business purposes only.
- 2) All passwords associated with the computer equipment will be protected
- 3) All equipment and supplies will be handled in such a manner to guard against damage caused by misuse.
- 4) All procedures or restrictions relating to the access to and maintenance of government information and data on a personal computer (including e-mail) will be in accordance with official Department of Defense policy.

Security	(Continue	(be

(Office) or any agent acting in behalf of	(Office) will
be responsible for all necessary identification on the equipment	(i.e., bar codes
and serial numbers), anti virus software and any other software	necessary for the
performance of the employee's work assignments.	

Liability

The employee understands that the Government will not be liable for damages to his/her personal or real property while he/she is working at the approved alternative workplace, except the extent the Government is held liable by the Federal Tort Claim Act or the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act.

Work Area

The employee agrees to provide a work area adequate for performance of official duties.

For work at home arrangements, the employee agrees to designate one area of the home as the official work or office area. The area must be suitable for the performance of official Government business. The Government's potential exposure to liability is restricted to this official work or office area for the purpose of telework.

Work Site Inspection

The employee agrees to permit ______ (Office) to inspect the alternative workplace during the employee's normal working hours to ensure proper maintenance of Government-owned property and conformance with safety standards. The employee agrees to complete a Self-Certification Safety Checklist, which is provided with this agreement.

Alternative Workplace Costs

The employee understands that the Government will not be responsible for any operating costs that are associated with the employee using his/her home as an alternative work site (i.e., home maintenance, insurance, or utilities). The employee understands he/she does not relinquish any entitlement to reimbursement for authorized expenses incurred while conducting business for the Government, as provided for by statue and regulations.

Injury Compensation

The employee understands that he/she is covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act if injured in the course of actually performing official duties at the regular office or the alternative duty station. The employee agrees to notify the supervisor immediately of any accident or injury that occurs at the alternative workplace and to complete any required forms. The supervisor agrees to investigate such a report immediately.

Work Assignments/Performance

The employee agrees to complete all assigned work according to procedures mutually agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor and according to guidelines and standards in the employee performance plan. The employee agrees to provide regular reports if required by the supervisor to help judge performance. The employee understands that a decline in performance may be grounds for canceling the alternative workplace arrangement.

Disclosure

The employee agrees to protect Government/agency records from unauthorized disclosure or damage and will comply with requirements of the Privacy of 1974, 5 U.S.C.552a.

Standards of Conduct

The employee agrees that he/she is bound by agency standards of conduct while working at the alternative work site.

Other A	ction
Nothing in this agreement precludes the a disciplinary or adverse action against an e provisions of this agreement.	
(Employee's signature)	(Date)

(Supervisor's signature)	(Date)
(Department Head's signature)	(Date)

Self-Certification Safety Checklist For Home-based

Telecommuters

The following checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of your alternative worksite. Please read and complete the self-certification safety checklist. Upon completion, you and your supervisor should sign and date the checklist in the spaces provided.

Na	ame:
O	rganization:
A	ddress:
Ci	ity/State:
H	ome Telephone:
	Iternative Worksite Location: Describe the designated work area in the alternative worksite.)
A.	Workplace Environment
1.	Are temperature, noise, ventilation and lighting levels adequate for maintaining your normal level of job performance? Yes [] No []
2.	Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that would cause physical harm (frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, and flexible wires running through walls, exposed wires to the ceiling)? Yes [] No []
	Will the building's electrical system permit the grounding of electrical equipment (a three-ong receptacle)? Yes[] No []
4.	Are aisles, doorways, and comers free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement? Yes [] No []
5.	Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways? Yes [] No []
6.	Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard? Yes [] No []
7.	Is the office space neat, clean, and free of excessive amounts of combustibles? Yes [] No [] Attachment 2

Employee's Sign	ature	Date	
Immediate Supervisor	's Signature	Date	
Approved []	Disapproved []		
Please return a copy of t	his form to your Telec	ommuting Program Coordi	nator.